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USAID Newsletter

Regional news

In its Sixth Round of Grants, Global Fund Approves Three New Grants for Central Asia

In late October, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria approved three grant applications from Central Asia. Grants for Kazakhstan (\$9.8 million) and Kyrgyzstan (\$10 million) will support expanded work in TB control and prevention, while a \$28 million grant for Tajikistan will finance both TB and HIV/AIDS work. In each country, USAID provided significant support for application process, as with the \$104 million Global Fund grants received in the region during earlier rounds. USAID staff coordinated extensive technical assistance from its implementing partners in developing the drafts, ensured linkages to USAID's ongoing strategies and programs in the region, and assisted with final reviews.



USAID activities for TB control and prevention in Central Asia now cover more than 50 percent of the total population.
Photo: USAID

Kyrgyzstan

Health Summit Reports Excellent Progress in Implementing National Health Reform “Manas Taalimi”

Directors of health facilities, vice-governors from oblasts, and international donor representatives gathered in September for the second biannual Health Summit to review the progress of Kyrgyz health reforms and discuss plans for 2007. The event was hosted by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Participants reported that reform is becoming an integral part of the routine operations of the Ministry of Health and noted excellent health sector budget execution.

USAID has worked with the Kyrgyz Ministry of Health since 1995 to create an efficient, high-quality health system, first through pilot demonstration projects, and then in support of the Kyrgyz health reform plan. USAID's ZdravPlus project provided technical assistance in the development of the “Manas Taalimi” strategy and assisted with costing and prioritizing activities. “Manas Taalimi” will institutionalize and increase the long-term sustainability of the successful Kyrgyz health reforms, and represents a complete incorporation of USAID's health reform recommendations into the national strategy.



Health professionals, donor representatives, local and international counterparts reviewed the progress of the national health reform.
Photo: USAID



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USAID Will Continue Support for the Kyrgyz National Scholarship Testing

On October 2, 2006, the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic and USAID signed an agreement to continue collaborative support in development of a national standardized test for university entrance. USAID helped introduce national testing in 2003. Through 2006, more than 150 thousand students participated in the national scholarship testing, and more than 25 thousand students from all regions of the country entered the universities with state-funded stipends. Currently, the National Scholarship Test is conducted by the Center for Educational Assessment and Teaching Methods, with USAID support. The National Scholarship Test provides equal opportunities and access to higher education through transparent, independent testing and is an important anticorruption effort in the area of education.



More than 150,000 Kyrgyz students have taken the National Scholarship Test, introduced with USAID support in 2003.

Photo: CEATM

Tajikistan

USAID Helps Construct Bazaar on the Pamir Highway to Increase Local Economic Opportunities

Tavildara's first bazaar, built with support from USAID's Tajikistan Conflict Prevention Project, officially opened on September 3. At the opening ceremony, the chairman of the district thanked USAID and its implementing partner Mercy Corps for recognizing and addressing the need for a marketplace in the district center. The new bazaar was constructed on the road connecting central Tajikistan, including Dushanbe, with the Badakhshan Autonomous Region, which lacks developed agriculture and cattle farms. The facility will serve the population of Badakhshan and the merchants supplying the region with food from Tavildara, which is a large producer of agricultural goods. At the same time, it will provide employment opportunities to local youth, thus alleviating potential sources of unemployment tension in Tavildara District.



The new bazaar will sell produce for the Dushanbe and Badakhshan Autonomous Region markets.

Photo: Mercy Corps

USAID's Tajikistan Conflict Prevention Project is implemented in Tavildara District by Mercy Corps. The project includes a significant component of small infrastructure projects for improving local employment possibilities, especially among youth who make about 50% of the country's population.

USAID-Initiated School Finance Mechanism Will be Introduced in New Regions across Tajikistan

On October 30, the Government of Tajikistan agreed to expand the new school finance mechanism to ten additional regions from the current five pilot regions of Kulob, Vahdat, Yavan, Khojand, and Khorog. The expansion, financed with Education for All Fast Track Initiative funds, will include management and accounting training of school directors and



USAID helps introduce interactive teaching methods and improve management of resources in Tajik schools.

Photo: USAID



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accountants to prepare them to manage school budget. USAID will provide technical assistance for analyses and monitoring in the pilot sites, and support the introduction of the best practices from the initial Kulob region pilot to the other pilot regions.

The new mechanism improves equity and efficiency in primary and secondary education by introducing budgeting based on per capita norms as opposed to existing input-based norms. In addition, schools gain greater autonomy in how they spend funds and are able to seek more efficient use of resources. The pilots are already showing efficiency improvements, for example, by combining small class groups. The Government has shown strong support for the new per capita mechanism since USAID began work on it in 2003. USAID directly supports the pilot in Kulob Region and assists the other four regions in replicating the pilot.

USAID-supported Public Awareness Campaign Teaches Communities to Protect their Environment

On October 31, USAID's Water Users Associations Support Program (WUASP) organized an environmental protection public campaign "How to avoid pollution of canals" at school #64 in Chorteppa Jamoat, Rudaki District. The campaign began with awards for the winners of the children's drawing and essay contests devoted to water preservation. Afterwards the schoolchildren and the mobile theatre from the Shaartuz district demonstrated short skits about equitable and effective distribution of irrigation water and rational use of drinking water. The publicity campaign ended with visiting a small exhibition of schoolchildren's work inside the school.



The USAID-supported campaign presented children's drawings about environment protection.
Photo: Winrock Intl

USAID's program, implemented by Winrock International, supports the effective use and distribution of irrigation water through improved management of irrigation systems, organization of associations for the collective use of the systems, and community involvement in the rational distribution of water.

Turkmenistan

USAID Launches Turkmenistan's First Rural TB-DOTS Pilot Site

On October 4, 2006, USAID and its partner Project HOPE assisted the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan in opening the country's first rural pilot for TB-DOTS treatment in the Serdar region. This expansion will make the WHO-recommended tuberculosis (TB) treatment available to an additional 62,000 people in the predominantly agricultural western Turkmenistan.

Turkmenistan's National TB-DOTS Program envisions a gradual expansion of DOTS (which stands for Directly Observed Treatment Short-course) program to cover the entire country by 2009. Until recently, the program was implemented only in Turkmenistan's larger cities and covered only about 40% of the population. Thanks to new USAID pilots, now it covers half the population. The Turkmen Government supported TB-DOTS expansion through in-kind



USAID helps to introduce the DOTS strategy into the primary health care system of Turkmenistan.
Photo: USAID



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contributions for renovation of the TB hospital and rapid issuance of necessary regulatory documents. Other international donors contributed laboratory equipment, reagents, and TB drugs.

USAID Helps Remote Communities to Solve Their Health Problems

Over the past three years approximately 90,000 people have benefited from the health initiatives, implemented by USAID's Healthy Communities Support Initiative. The program assists NGOs and citizens' groups to identify their needs and implement local public health initiatives in Turkmenistan, and has completed 47 local health initiative projects worth \$180,000 since 2003. The program is implemented in all five Turkmenistan's provinces in cooperation with Civil Society Support Centers and local partner organizations.

Turkmen Greenhouse Farmers USAID Support

In September 2006, six leading Turkmen greenhouse growers and greenhouse input suppliers traveled to Uzbekistan to meet growers from the eastern part of that country. This exchange was the initial activity to be organized under the framework of USAID's new Agricultural Improvement Project, implemented by Winrock International. The project will undertake pilot activities to build competitiveness and strengthen value chains for domestic, regional and international markets. Additionally, the project aims to increase rural incomes by helping farmers and agribusinesses to link with agricultural markets, produce better products and deliver consistent quality goods to the local and regional markets. During the study tour Turkmen growers learned new technologies such as drip irrigation and developed connections with Uzbek agricultural input suppliers that will help Turkmen greenhouse growers introduce these technologies.



USAID's grant helped this kindergarten in western Turkmenistan install a drinking water system.
Photo: Counterpart Intl



With USAID support, Turkmen greenhouse farmers learn from their Uzbek colleagues.
Photo: Winrock Intl